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CHRB NEWS RELEASE

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**BOARD SEEKS TO ENSURE HORSES CARRY CORRECT WEIGHT**

FRESNO, CA – The California Horse Racing Board resolved Thursday to develop procedures to ensure that horses always carry their assigned weight in races and that the public is fully informed about all of the weight and equipment that horses actually do carry.

CHRB Chairman John Harris created an ad hoc committee, chaired by Commissioner Richard Shapiro, to work with jockeys, horse owners, trainers, racing associations, stewards, and other racing officials to develop a process that is transparent and completely open to public scrutiny.

Depending on what the ad hoc committee eventually recommends, this new process could involve placing a scale outside of the jockeys' room and requiring all riders to weigh out in full public view as they leave the room to walk to the saddling paddock. Other items, such as the saddle cloth and equipment not worn or carried by the jockey, would need to be weighed separately. Notices could be placed in the official program indicating the weights horses are carrying and listing any items excluded from the weights.

"The goal of this committee is not to review the riding scale of weights," said Commissioner Shapiro, "but rather to make certain that horses are carrying the accurate weight assigned to them, and to fully disclose to the public what weight is being carried."

Commissioner Marie Moretti added, "We need to guarantee the honesty and integrity of the process."

Jockeys currently weigh out for races in a private setting before they leave for the paddock and before they put on safety equipment that is specifically excluded by regulations from being included in the weights. Darrell Haire, western business manager for the Jockeys' Guild, told the racing commissioners that safety vests and safety helmets can weigh as little as eight ounces or more than two pounds each, so there could be a variation of several pounds among jockeys depending on their personal preferences in safety equipment.

Equipment carried by the horse that is not currently being included in the weights, such as the saddle cloth, also can vary by several pounds, according to testimony Thursday.

"There are so many variables," said Craig Fravel, executive vice president of the Del Mar Thoroughbred Club. "We need to determine collectively what the best material for saddle cloths is, decide on the best helmet, decide on the best vest, and that process could take some time."

In recent days, in an effort to improve the process, racing executives, stewards, and representatives of the Jockeys' Guild were exploring options and making changes to the weighing-out process, and these changes caused some confusion. Given the direction the Board decided to go Thursday, racing authorities will step back for now and leave the long-standing process in place. CHRB investigators and the stewards will continue to monitor the process.

"We are going to continue with traditional weighing procedures for the immediate future while the ad hoc committee works on the total process to determine ways to make it more transparent," announced Harris.

Unrelated to the weighing procedures, Commissioner Shapiro and Fravel reported that progress on a comprehensive health study of jockeys is moving forward. This study is intended to assess the health and well being of the jockey colony in an effort to insure that jockeys ride at their optimum level. The study will not be limited to just California, and will include other racing jurisdictions and racing organizations.

In other business, the Board adopted an emergency regulation to affirm the CHRB's authority to heighten surveillance in the stable areas, including the use of audio-visual equipment and the designation of security stalls. The staff will submit the emergency regulation to the State Office of Administrative Law, which will have up to 10 days to give its approval. The Board still is required to go through the public hearing process for a permanent rule.

"We already have the power for surveillance within the enclosure (the barn areas)," said Chairman Harris. "The purpose of this regulation is to clarify what we are doing."

The emergency regulation states in part that "any horse, stable, or trainer that is on the premises (is) subject to heightened surveillance" that could include "audio, video, or any other means determined by the Board," such as "having the horse stabled in a stall which has on-premises security." The Board will have "absolute and sole discretion" in the matter.

The emergency regulation is part of a continuing effort by the Board, working with the industry, to insure a level the playing field for all racing participants and to improve the public's confidence and perception of the sport's integrity.

The Board also adopted a regulatory amendment for the Pick Three, which eliminates the practice of substituting the race favorite for a horse scratched from any leg of the wager. With the amendment in place, the Pick Three will treat scratches the same way they are handled in Daily Double wagers. If the scratch occurs before the running of the first leg, the wager is refunded. If the scratch occurs in a later race after the first leg has been run, there will be consolation payouts.

The commissioners heard a preliminary report from a representative of Scientific Games Racing on a proposal to implement net pool pricing for California racing associations with regard to the commingling of wagering pools with Canadian racetracks. Net pool pricing is a calculation process that would allow other jurisdictions to use their own takeout instead of conforming to California's, which typically has a lower takeout. The result would be a different, lower payout to Canadian bettors than the prices posted at the California racetrack. The Board took no action.

"We need to be certain that any change would not impact negatively on California bettors or stakeholders," said Harris. "We will review any request as part of the license application process."

The Board approved the application to conduct a horse race meeting of the Hollywood Park Fall Racing Association from November 9 through December 19, and amended the racing dates of the recently approved license of the Pacific Racing Association at Golden Gate Fields to October 19 through December 19, 2005.

Executive Director Ingrid Fermin received support from the commissioners for her plan to require racetracks to install additional cameras wherever the Board and its stewards feel the cameras are warranted, such as at the five-sixteenths pole to provide stewards with an improved view of the field rounding the turn.

The CHRB staff provided reports for the recently concluded meets at Del Mar and Cal Expo. Whereas Del Mar had an outstanding meet and its figures were improved in most categories, including a 4.7 percent increase in average daily handle and a 24 percent increase in advance deposit wagering, the harness meet at Cal Expo suffered severe drops in all categories when compared with the mixed-breed fair meet of the year before, including a 62-percent decline in average daily handle. The Cal Expo Board will be advising the CHRB later this month about its plans for next summer.

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